

## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

## INFORMATION REPORT

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REPORT

SUBJECT Party Meeting in Vienna to Hear a Reading of the Charges against Beriya

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This is UNEVALUATED Information

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1. A meeting of active Communist Party members in the Soviet administration in Vienna to hear a reading of Prosecutor General Roman Andreyevich Rudenko's charges against Beriya and his accomplices was held in Vienna one Saturday in January 1954. The meeting lasted from 0900 to 1500 and was attended by about 80 persons from the High Commissioner's apparat, USIA, the Oil Directorate, Danube Shipping, TORGPRED, and TASS. A similar meeting was held in Baden by the military.
2. The meeting was called by Kharchenko, who was the direct representative of the Central Committee of the CPSU and, as such, was, in fact if not officially, the second ranking Soviet official in Austria directly after the High Commissioner. Kharchenko was the secretary for the Profsoyuz, which is known abroad as the Profkom (Profsoyuz komitet). Although in the Soviet Union the Communist Party and the Profsoyuz are two distinct organizations, in Austria all Party members are known as members of the Profsoyuz whether they actually belong to Profsoyuz or not.<sup>1</sup> Kharchenko's official title is Secretary of the Joint Committee (Sekretar Obiedinennogo Profkoma). Within each section of the High Commissioner's apparat and other organizations, such as USIA, there is a separate Party organization, but all are subordinated to Kharchenko. His office staff consists of a deputy, Makarov, and a secretary.

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4. Kharchenko, Kraskevich, and Sergey Mikhailovich Kudryatsev [ ] took turns reading the document. the report, which was signed by Rudenko, [ ] was similar to: "O Podryvnoy Predatel'skoy Deyatel'nosti Beriia, Lavrentiya Pavlovicha, Goglidze, Vlodzimirskogo, Meshika, Merkulova, i Kobulova" (Concerning the subversive, treasonable activity of Beriia, Lavrentiy Pavlovich, Goglidze, Vlodzimirskiy, Meshik, Merkulov, and Kobulov). All these persons were listed with their full names, and their positions were given as follows: Lavrentiy Pavlovich Beriia, First Deputy Minister of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Internal Affairs; Bogdan Zakharovich Kobulov, First Deputy Minister of the MVD; Vsevolod Nikolayevich Merkulov, Minister of State Control; Sergey Arseniyevich Goglidze, Chief of an unnamed MVD directorate; Vladimir Georgiyevich Dekanozov, MVD Minister for the Georgian Republic; Pavel Yakovlevich Meshik, MVD Minister for the Ukrainian Republic; L.E. Vlodzimirskiy, Chief of the Investigating Section in the Special Council of the MVD. 25X1
5. The report had been distributed through Party organization lines from the Central Committee. It was returned to Moscow immediately after it was read, as Kharchenko did not feel that he had the authority to keep it after it had served its purpose. 25X1
6. The report opened with the words "Obvinitel'noye Zaklyucheniye po delu ..." (The summary of the charges in the case against ...) and began with a discussion of the events at the time of the death of Stalin. The report stated that, after Stalin's death, Beriia had surrounded himself with Georgians and faithful servants who had worked for him previously, in order to overthrow the Government and to seize power for himself. Furthermore, he had tried to place himself above the Party and had attempted to use MVD organs to achieve the overthrow of the Government and to further his treasonable activities. As a result of the investigations which had been conducted, it was evident that Beriia had been an agent of international imperialism. The report was broken down to cover various phases of Beriia's life, his activities during the collectivization period, his term as Minister of Internal Affairs in the Georgian Republic (sic), his activities as Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party in Georgia (sic), his term as Narkom of Internal Affairs, USSR, his activities up to, during, and after the war, and in the period following Stalin's death until his arrest.<sup>2</sup> All these phases were covered under separate chronological headings.
7. The first covered the period from 1918 to 1922, when Beriia was in the Caucasus in Baku, Tbilisi, and other cities. The report indicated that, from the investigations conducted, in 1918 Beriia had joined the Mussavat service, which at that time was under the direction of the British, who occupied a part of the Caucasus. Reference was made to a document which showed that Beriia had searched the houses of two Communist Party members. The names and addresses were given in the report. In addition, Beriia was shown a document which stated that he worked for the Mussavatists and that he used a pseudonym (klichka). When shown this document, Beriia had replied, "It is difficult for me at this time to recall whether this was definitely so." However, he definitely admitted to searching the home of one of the men mentioned in the report. It was further charged that he had concealed this activity from the Communists and rose to the position of Minister of Internal Affairs for Georgia. The report revealed that with the help of Merkulov, Goglidze, and several other persons, Beriia had succeeded in blackmailing the Party organizations and had arrested Georgians without due cause. All these things were done for his own interest. Occasionally he had charged persons who opposed him with having made attempts on his life. To support such accusations, false witnesses and documents had been produced in the court trials and the person or groups of persons so charged had been executed. In this manner, Beriia removed any opposition he encountered. Cases of misconduct were cited for the time he was Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Georgia, when Goglidze was MVD Minister there.

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Merkulov was also present at the time. It was charged that Beriya claimed undeserved credit for himself as the savior of Georgia and several incidents were reported in which he had removed those who had opposed him by having them falsely charged and sentenced. Names and pertinent data were given.

8. The next portion of the report covered the period when Beriya served as the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs in Moscow, having replaced Nikolay Yezhov. When he received this appointment he succeeded in bringing Merkulov, Goglidze, Kobulov, Meshik, and a number of others with him and in placing them in responsible positions in his own apparatus. His activities during this period included unjust trials of Soviet citizens who had sent letters of criticism to the Central Committee of the CPSU charging that the NKVD was executing prisoners without trials and that the trials were not being conducted in accordance with Soviet law as set forth in the Criminal Code. One particular instance was cited -- the Kedrov case. Kedrov was a former CGPU worker who had been secretary to Feliks Dzerzhinskiy. The report stated that Kedrov possessed information on Beriya, the revelation of which could have compromised Beriya's position in the Communist Party and as a Chekist leader. To get rid of Kedrov, Beriya placed him under surveillance and had his home wired. When Kedrov sent his son with a letter to the Central Committee of the CPSU, Beriya arranged an automobile accident in which the son was killed. Once the letter was in Beriya's hands, Kedrov was sentenced by a Special Soveschaniye to eight years in prison. While in prison, he wrote a letter requesting that his case be reviewed and pointing out that he had participated in the civil war and had won a name for himself as leader of a division which fought in the north in the Arkhangelsk area. He further asked to be informed as to how he was guilty, stating that, if he were guilty, he would be willing to serve out a sentence according to Soviet law, but that he did not feel that he was guilty in any way. He stated further that while in prison he had been hung by his feet several times and beaten and that on many occasions Beriya himself had kicked him and beaten him with a rubber hose. This letter also fell into Beriya's hands and Kedrov's wife was immediately arrested and imprisoned. During the war, Kedrov was among a group of twenty prisoners who were being moved from the Moscow prison to a prison in Kuybyshev because of the German advance. Because Kedrov was in the group, an order was issued to execute all the prisoners. This was done while they were enroute to Kuybyshev. Merkulov sanctioned the execution of the group on orders from Beriya. Two or three other prominent Soviet citizens were also included in this group, although none of them had received sentences in excess of ten years. It was also reported that, while Beriya was Narkom, he frequently permitted prisoners to be beaten in his office, and that he had several blackjacks (dubinki) in his office and used them at times. This was confirmed by Merkulov and Kobulov. It was further stated that Beriya, occasionally accompanied by these two and Goglidze, would attend the interrogations at the Lefortovo and Butyrskiy prisons, where they had special equipment for such work. This equipment was sometimes used by Beriya, Merkulov, and Goglidze. Primarily, Beriya was charged with beating prisoners. When the victim fell to the ground, Beriya would kick him and spit at him. These charges were supported by statements of one or two prisoners who had lived through these experiences. The report stated that Merkulov and Goglidze had admitted that Beriya had participated in the beatings, but omitted any mention of Beriya's comments or admissions of guilt.
9. The next period covered was that of the Otechestvennaya Voyna (Fatherland War), 1941-1945, when Beriya was a member of the Committee of State Defense (Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Oborony). The report dealt primarily with Beriya's responsibility for the defense of the Caucasus when the Germans occupied the northern area. It stated that Beriya took over the direction of the battle from the army generals and specialists and turned it over to his

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MVD officers, who had no military experience whatever. One of these officers was Colonel General Petrov. The names of several army officers who testified that this action resulted in heavy loss of life were contained in the report. It was also reported that Beriya toured the front lines once during his entire time in the Caucasus. Most of the time was spent in drinking and carousing with his prostitutes. "A whole wagonload" of prostitutes always followed his car. Meanwhile, the entire press apparatus was used by Merkulov and other close associates of Beriya to build him up as the defender of the Caucasus, although the report stated that the opposite was the case and that Beriya's arrival caused only disorganization. He was also charged with holding the MVD troops in reserve and not committing them to battle, even to relieve army troops as was requested by the army generals. Though the MVD troops numbered many tens of thousands, Beriya never released a single division for battle.

10. It was brought out that, during the post-war period, when Beriya was on the Council of Ministers, he attempted to utilize his apparatus for his own benefit and had frequently used Merkulov for this purpose. The latter, a writer whose plays had been produced on the Moscow stage, had written a fine biography of Beriya for the Great Soviet Encyclopedia. The report also stated that Beriya had caused great damage in farming, but did not specifically say what the damage was. Source could not understand how Beriya could have done anything in that field, as he had nothing to do with farming.
11. After Stalin's death, the document reported, Beriya had attempted to set himself above the Party and to seize power by using his faithful friends and the whole MVD complex to accomplish this end. He was also charged with gathering material through surveillance and wire-tapping on government leaders for exposure at a later date and with attempting to reawaken nationalism in the Soviet Republics, particularly in the Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. Towards this end, he had replaced the leading Great Russian personalities in these republics with natives.
12. In conclusion, the report dealt with Beriya's moral degeneration. A book containing the names of 80 prostitutes was found in his safe. In addition, 200 witnesses, including prostitutes, young girls, and women, had been called and had confessed to having had affairs with Beriya. These 200 were from Moscow alone. The particular cases cited included the rape of a 14-year-old girl, a seventh-grade student. Beriya had spotted her while driving in his car and sent his Chief of Security, Colonel Sarkisov, after her. The latter followed her home and told her that an important person wanted to speak to her. Because her mother was ill, the girl refused to go. At this point, the colonel produced his identification and told her to come with him for a few minutes. Beriya gave her some food and drink and then attempted to rape her. As the girl fought and screamed, she was then drugged. The girl was held for three days and then sent home with instructions not to mention the incident to anyone, or her mother would be shot. The girl broke down and told her mother, who asked her to lead her to the place where she had stayed. Her mother went in and slapped Beriya across the face, telling him that she would write a letter to the Central Committee of the CPSU about the incident. Beriya replied that she would not live if she did so. The mother did not report the matter until after his arrest and the letter was used as evidence against him. Other cases followed the same pattern. If Beriya saw an attractive woman on the street, he would simply send his guard to get her. When asked about the names in the notebook, Beriya gave no answer, but the Chief of Security stated that these women were under surveillance because they might have attempted to inform the Central Committee of the CPSU. Another charge was that Beriya had forced his attentions on the wives of the MVD workers by threatening to arrest their husbands. A particular case in point was the

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wife of Colonel Schlyuger. Another charge was that of excessive drinking.

13. The report also indicated that the author of the book The History of Bolshevik Organizations of Transcaucasia was not Beriya, as had been claimed, but Merkulov and Ludvigov. The latter was Merkulov's assistant in the Council of Ministers. . . Later, he was sent with Dekanozov to Georgia, where he became Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia. Beriya's close friendship with men like Merkulov and Dekanozov was pointed out in the report. A letter from Merkulov to Beriya was produced as evidence. Written when the former was Minister of State Control, it said, "Dear Lavrentiy, I think you will remember our former work in the Caucasus and I trust you will not forget about me when you have an opportunity to place me in the MVD. I am always ready to serve you faithfully. The position I am now holding is unsuitable for me..... Vladislav."<sup>3</sup> Excerpts were also quoted from other letters which indicated that the writers regarded Beriya as their god. One such letter was from Goglidze when he was in the Far East, and another from Kobulov when he was serving as Chief of the Chief Directorate of Soviet Property Abroad.<sup>4</sup>
14. The only mention in the report of Beriya's role in the death of Sergo Ordzhonikidze was that the latter had hated Beriya. Beriya had placed Ordzhonikidze's family under surveillance and had had his son arrested on a minor charge, imprisoning him again as soon as he was released. In addition, Beriya had decreased the food ration of Ordzhonikidze's family.
15. The report did not contain any mention of the doctor's plot. The report did bring out the fact that Beriya had attempted to establish contact with Tito, but did not go into any details.
16. With regard to Beriya's relationship with Stalin, the report stated only that he had attempted to gain Stalin's trust. The report also brought out that Beriya's wife had maintained contact by mail with Gegechkori in Paris.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Beriya had sent a plane to Paris to pick up a distant relative who had voluntarily remained abroad after the war because he did not want to return to the Soviet Union and face trial. Upon his return, he was given a job and did not go on trial. The MVD representative in Paris discovered that Beriya maintained contact with Georgians there. A number of excerpts from letters was contained in the report.
17. Another charge was that Beriya had attempted to save I.M. Mayskiy, former Soviet Ambassador to Great Britain, who was tried and convicted on the charge of having been a British spy. Mayskiy admitted the truth of the charges, but Beriya, hoping to save Mayskiy, called him in twice and asked him to refute the charges. There was no mention of Mayskiy's subsequent fate, but source believes he may have been shot.

Comments:

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1. It has been reported that Party members, before leaving the USSR, turn in their Party cards for safekeeping and receive in exchange a Profsoyuz card bearing the same number.
2. The most important posts held by Beriya before he became People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR were those of Chief of the OGPU for the Transcaucasian Soviet Federated Republic, which he left to become, in 1931, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party and, in 1932, First Secretary of the Party of the Transcaucasian S.F.S.R.

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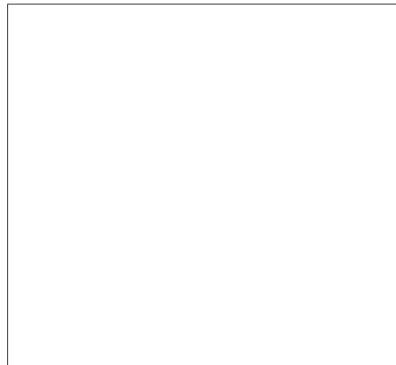
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3. Merkulov's name was Vsevolod Nikolayevich.
4. Goglidze commanded MVD troops in Khabarovsk Kray in 1946 and was MGB chief for the Transbaykal Military District in 1949. Kobulov has been reported as deputy to Merkulov, who was chief of the Chief Directorate of Soviet Property Abroad.
5. Gegechkori is a Georgian emigre leader in Paris.
6. Kraskevich is the USSR Deputy High Commissioner for Austria.



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